

WisDOT Testimony on AB-644
January 17, 2008

Mr. Chairman:

My name is Lieutenant Charles Lorentz and I am with the motor carrier enforcement section in the Division of State Patrol, at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

On behalf of Secretary Busalacchi, I am here to speak in Opposition relative to Assembly Bill 644.

The ultimate goal of this legislation--and with current law--is to ensure that students are transported in a "safe" vehicle. This is to be accomplished by the inspection of the vehicle for compliance with motor vehicle safety and equipment requirements.

Inspection is already required by current law. This bill merely shifts the inspection responsibility to the State Patrol, away from private mechanics. If DPI and the school districts adhere to the inspection requirement of current law then the goal of a safe vehicle is already being accomplished.

State Patrol Inspectors perform annual inspections on school buses, motor coaches, and Human Service Vehicles, because each of those vehicles have equipment or design features that are specific to the type of vehicle and in many cases are prohibited for installation on general vehicle types. For example, State Patrol inspectors will inspect a school bus stop arm, which an auto mechanic may lack inspection expertise and training.

This bill addresses Alternative vehicles, which are not specialized vehicles and there are no specialized equipment or design features that require inspection by a law enforcement officer. There is no specialized equipment, and a trained mechanic can fully determine the mechanical roadworthiness of these alternative vehicles.

To have State Patrol inspectors perform annual inspections would be very costly and require more inspectors. Alternative school vehicles include any vehicle transporting a pupil that is owned or leased by a school or school bus contractor or is operated by a school district employee, including ordinary automobiles, mini vans, station wagons. If there were only one alternative school vehicle for each private and public school in Wisconsin, the State Patrol would be inspecting an additional 3,301 vehicles a year. This would require 6.6 FTE inspectors at a cost of \$621,435 annually.

The type of inspections that should be performed on these ordinary vehicles is likely the so-called "30 point" or "100 point" safety inspections performed by

ASE certified mechanics who are familiar with the equipment and mechanical system installed on the various makes and models used as alternative school vehicles.

Thank you.